

Iran-Contra Panels Seek Strict Rules on Covert Acts

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 14 — The report by the Congressional Iran-contra committees will recommend new rules for covert operations that go further than the changes announced earlier this year by President Reagan, according to Congressional officials.

The officials said the report would urge that all covert operations be reported to Congress within 48 hours without exception. Mr. Reagan has already pledged to do this in most cases but has insisted on retaining the right to keep Congress in the dark in "exceptional circumstances."

The Iran-contra panel will also recommend that Congress be informed when the Central Intelligence Agency relies on any third party or foreign nation in carrying out its operations, a suggestion that the agency has previously resisted for security reasons.

Senator David L. Boren, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said in an interview that the impending release of the report meant that time was growing short for William H. Webster, the Director of Central Intelligence, to take action against agency officials implicated in the Iran-contra affair.

"Obviously there needs to be an evaluation on his part whether or not some individuals have acted improperly in this situation," said Senator Boren, an Oklahoma Democrat. "We have to see then what kind of action is appropriate if he draws that conclusion, and I suspect he will draw it in a few cases."

Webster Has Own Study

Mr. Webster has said he will make no decisions on the matter until his own special counsel reviews the Congressional report and completes his investigation of the agency's involvement.

"We're coming to the time that will be viewed as the testing time," Senator

Boren said. "We'll now be watching closely to see if he takes some decisive action. All of us have felt that he should be given time to get on board, learn for himself the facts. Now I'd have to say the clock is starting to run and that the next six to eight weeks are crucial."

The Senator did not say who, if anyone, should be disciplined as a result of the Iran affair, but he said of Mr. Webster, "It's going to be important for him to demonstrate by year's end that he's done some appropriate internal housecleaning."

In the Iran-contra affair, several C.I.A. operatives in Central America were directly involved in assisting the Nicaraguan rebel supply operation directed by the White House, violating agency rules and possibly the Congressional restrictions on aid to the contras.

There was testimony that at least one senior agency official was aware of this activity.

In addition, some officials testified that Duane Clarridge, a senior C.I.A. official, knowingly assisted a shipment of arms to Iran in November 1985. Mr. Clarridge, however, insisted to the Iran-contra committee that he had believed he was moving oil drilling parts.

Senator Boren said the issue of how Mr. Webster handles the matter is particularly important because there are a range of bills that have been proposed in Congress, some of which would impose even more stringent controls over C.I.A. operations than those called for in the Iran-contra report.

"The input he gives the committee on legislation will be enhanced or diminished by the extent to which he is

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viewed as being on top of things," Senator Boren said of Mr. Webster.

Senator Boren is one of the co-sponsors of a bill introduced by William S. Cohen, Republican of Maine, that seeks to put into law many of the recommendations of the Iran-contra hearings.

Senator Cohen's bill says that to direct an intelligence operation, the President must prepare a written order, or finding, and share it with Congress within 48 hours. It specifically bars retroactive approval of covert operations, as was done in November 1985 with the C.I.A.'s assistance for a shipment of arms to Iran.

The Iran-contra committee, which rejected suggestions that the House and Senate Intelligence Committees be merged, will register opposition to retroactive findings in its report, Congressional officials said.

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